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Selected Speeches and News Releases

April 21 - April 28, 1988

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Information

USDA TO ALLOW INTERSTATE MOVEMENT OF CERTAIN GENETICALLY ENGINEERED ORGANISMS

WASHINGTON, April 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will now allow certain genetically engineered microorganisms to be moved interstate between research facilities without a permit.

James W. Glosser, acting administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said APHIS scientists have carefully reviewed the commonly used laboratory organisms being exempted by this action and have found that when properly packaged they do not pose a risk to people, plants, animals or the environment.

The exempted microorganisms are Escherichia coli genotype K-12 and its derivatives, sterile strains of Saccharomyces cerevisiae or asporogenic (nonspore forming) strains of Bacillus subtilis. The organisms must not contain genetic sequences that allow them to invade or damage plants. Glosser said shippers must still follow conditions outlined by APHIS.

APHIS, which is charged with preventing the introduction or spread of plant pests, established regulations in June 1987 that initiated a permit system for the importation, interstate movement and environmental release of certain genetically engineered organisms and products.

The regulations separate exempted organisms that are shown by scientific data and experience to be safe from those requiring review before they can be moved between research facilities.

The microorganisms being exempted are not only nontoxic but cannot survive outside of carefully controlled laboratory conditions, Glosser said. Therefore, in case of an accidental spill during transport the organisms would perish and could not endanger anything or anyone.

The National Institutes of Health, which administers guidelines for genetic engineering research, has also excluded these microorganisms from risk categories requiring special containment.

APHIS proposed this change in the Federal Register on Sept. 24 and received 15 comments. Responses to the comments have been made in the final ruling, published in the April 20 Federal Register.

For more information contact Terry L. Medley, Director of Biotechnology and Environmental Coordination Staff, APHIS, USDA, Room 400, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782; telephone (301) 436-7602.

Anita K. Brown (301) 436-6455

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USDA PUBLISHES CHANGES IN PROGRAM FOR SULFAMETHAZINE TESTING OF HOGS

WASHINGTON, April 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that it has begun using a rapid, in-plant screening test, known as the Sulfa-On-Site (SOS) test, in its intensified program for testing for violative levels of sulfamethazine residues in hogs brought to slaughter plants.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service reports that the SOS test is now being used in 23 swine-slaughtering facilities. The test enables inspectors in those facilities to test animals for sulfamethazine residues in a matter of a few hours.

FSIS Administrator Lester M. Crawford said that by May 27, the SOS test will be in use in approximately 100 plants, which account for 97 percent of all swine slaughtered nationwide.

In the 23 plants where SOS testing is underway, six samples are taken each day for testing. If a sample tests positive, the inspector will retain, and, upon confirmation by laboratory testing, condemn carcasses that contain violative residue level. Any sulfamethazine residue level above 0.1 parts per million in muscle tissue of hogs is a violation.

Notice of this action was published today in the Federal Register.

Linda Swacina (202) 447-9113

#

USDA DROUGHT TASK FORCE MONITORS SITUATION

WASHINGTON, April 22—Early indications of weather and moisture conditions which are likely to lead to a drought in portions of the country have led Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng to establish intensive monitoring of that situation this spring.

Those conditions are being watched closely from here and in the field by a number of U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies, Lyng said. Weekly meetings to review developments are being held by a USDA Drought Task Force, which was appointed by the Secretary March 1.

Deputy Secretary Peter C. Myers was appointed to chair the group of agency administrators and key personnel who are either constantly monitoring the potential drought situation or are from agencies whose programs will become more involved as the situation worsens.

"We are increasing our contact with state agriculture departments in the affected areas while relying heavily on our Food and Agriculture Council members (state directors of USDA agencies) to provide us with a constant flow of information regarding the moisture situation and preparations their agency is taking to help in that state," Lyng said.

The Pacific Northwest and Western states, which suffered through a drought last year, appear to be the prime regions for another drought with portions of several states reporting the February-March period being the driest on record.

Conditions likely to cause problems for agricultural producers prevail in parts of California, Nevada, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Washington, Utah and North Dakota. Other states have experienced extremely dry weather in smaller areas and concerns are mounting that forest fires could be severe this year.

USDA agencies whose administrators are serving on the task force or are represented by key personnel include the Office of Economics, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation and the Forest Service.

Several of the agency administrators report their state and county offices in the affected areas have been answering numerous inquiries about various federal drought assistance programs, some of which can be utilized without an official disaster designation by the Secretary.

For instance, ASCS is experiencing heavy participation by grain producers in the 0/92 program in areas of the Pacific Northwest which rely on reservoirs and irrigation. This indicates the producers' expectations that there will not be sufficient moisture and irrigation water for those crops, ASCS officials said.

Dave Lane (202) 447-8005

#

FOREST SERVICE ISSUES RULE ON APPEALING REOFFERED TIMBER SALES

WASHINGTON, April 22—Under a new rule adopted today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, anyone may appeal agency decisions to reoffer timber sales from returned or defaulted timber sale contracts on national forests.

Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson said the new rule is the result of a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision Dec. 21, 1987, in San Francisco, Calif., that these reoffered sales were subject to the agency's administrative appeals regulations. Because these sales had been subject to appeal at their initial offering, the Forest Service had not considered the decision to reoffer them appealable.

Under the final rule, published in today's Federal Register, anyone, except the defaulting purchasers, may appeal future decisions to reoffer sales that were returned or defaulted. In addition, anyone wishing to appeal a reoffer decision made prior to Jan. 28, may do so until May 23. The Forest Service already has received 243 appeals on reoffered timber sales as the result of an interim rule published earlier this year.

As directed by Congress in the F.Y. 1987 Appropriations Act, decisions to reoffer timber sales made after Oct. 30, 1986, may be appealed to the next highest level of Forest Service authority for a final ruling. Decisions to reoffer timber sales made prior to Oct. 30, 1986, may be appealed through the next two highest levels of authority.

The Federal Timber Contract Modification Act of 1984 provided an opportunity for national forest timber purchasers to buy out of many of their contracts. Declining timber prices had made it uneconomical for many purchasers to fulfill their contracts. The act directed that timber returned to the government through buy outs or defaults be given preference for resale.

Nationwide, 1,578 timber sales, incorporating a total volume of 9.7 billion board feet, were returned to the Forest Service. Reoffering of these sales began in fiscal year 1986, with completion expected in fiscal year 1989.

Further information on the appeals rule is available from Larry Hill, Staff Assistant for Operations, NFS, Forest Service, USDA, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, D.C. 20090-6090, (202) 382-9349.

Rose Narlock (202) 475-3778

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USDA UNDER SECRETARY CALLS FOR REFORM IN WORLD AGRICULTURAL TRADE

ARLINGTON, Texas, April 22—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today called for the participants in the Uruguay Round of the multilateral trade talks to "forge ahead" in their efforts to phase out trade-distorting government programs such as export subsidies.

Speaking before the Texas Grain and Feed Association's 90th Annual Convention, Goldberg said "the need for reform in world agricultural trade remains urgent."

Goldberg said the latest data on European Community export subsidies released by the EC Commission showed that last week, the EC paid U.S.$126 per metric ton in subsidies to its wheat exporters.

"The numbers for other commodities are even more dramatic," he said. "The subsidy for mixed feed was $291; for semolina, $286; for durum wheat, $281; for barley malt, $206. Although world prices have fallen, the EC still relies on these exorbitant subsidy levels to sustain high levels of exports."

Goldberg pointed to the EC's barley program as an example of a program that encourages surplus production and subsidized exports. "Before 1985, the EC subsidy for barley was $40 per ton," he said. "Today that subsidy is $130 a ton. At the same time, EC exports rose from an average of 4.6 million tons a year to 8.5 million tons this year."

Goldberg said the United States also subsidizes its agricultural exports, chiefly through the Export Enhancement Program, but pointed out that the program was implemented on a short-term basis because of the severe pressure placed on U.S. agriculture by the subsidies of competitors in the world market.

Goldberg told the association that the United States is continuing to press on in its efforts to eliminate all agricultural subsidies over the next 10 years.

"For too long, market signals have been blocked by government intervention such as export subsidy programs," he said. "We believe that market forces should be allowed to operate freely to determine producer decisions. In essence, we seek a trading environment where production and trade levels are determined by each country's relative efficiency and comparative advantage and not by the size of its agricultural budget."

Recent European Community Export Subsidies for Selected Commodities

Week Granted	Commodity	U.S.Dollars/ Metric Ton
April 14	wheat (non-durum)	$126
	barley	$130
	corn	$148
	rice (long-grain)	$374
	wheat flour	$170
	durum wheat[1]	$281
	semolina	$286
	barley malt	$206
	mixed feed	$291
March 21	poultry (whole, frozen)	
	EEP destinations	$734
	others	$460

[1]based on last known sale to Algeria in January

Continued High Export Subsidy Level Used To Sustain EC Barley Exports

	1983/84	1984/85	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88
Barley Exports (million tons)	4.2	8.5	8.1	6.2	8.5
Mid-April Subsidy ($/ton)	43	40	112	158	130

Note: prior to 1983/84, EC barley exports only averaged 4.6 million tons annually

Sally Klusaritz (202) 447-3448

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PROCEDURES REVISED FOR ADJUSTING PRICE SUPPORT LOANS TO COVER HANDLING AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS

WASHINGTON, April 22—Milton Hertz, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation, announced today that CCC will make changes in procedures for adjusting price support loans to cover certain handling and transportation costs incurred by producers in moving grain to available approved storage locations to obtain price support loans.

"Changes are being made to provide a more uniform policy in moving loan collateral and CCC-owned grain and to be consistent with market-oriented objectives of the Food Security Act of 1985," Hertz said.

The amount of a producer's price support loan may be increased to reflect certain transportation and handling costs. Producers, when repaying their loans, repay these handling and transportation costs.

Under the revised procedures:

—Grain movements must be approved by CCC in advance;

—a producer's price support loan may be adjusted once as the result of such a movement;

—adjustments will be available for new crop movements made during the first five months of the current marketing year for a commodity;

—truck freight rate schedules have been updated;

—adjustments for handling costs will be made in an amount not to exceed five cents for "in-charges" and 5 cents for "out-charges" per bushel.

This procedure becomes effective May 1. Further details may be obtained from county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service offices.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-6787

#

USDA ANNOUNCES NEW HORSE PROTECTION RULES

WASHINGTON, April 22—U.S. Department of Agriculture officials today announced new interim rules concerning the use of pads and other devices that may cause soring in show horses. The rules take effect Monday, April 25.

According to James W. Glosser, acting administrator of USDA's

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the new rules phase in restrictions on the height of pads used on show horses. From April 25 thru July 31, pads may be no more than three inches high; from Aug. 1 thru Oct. 31, two inches; and, effective Nov. 1, no more than one-half inch high covering the sole of the foot. At that time, however, an additional half-inch "rim" pad will be allowed between the full pad and the shoe. All pads must be made of leather or other similar soft pliable material.

The new rules prohibit chains or rollers that weigh more than six ounces, including the weight of the fastener. Weights on the hoof other than the specified pads are also prohibited, except for horseshoes weighing up to 16 ounces.

According to Glosser, the reason that the restrictions on pad height are being phased in is to prevent trauma to show horses, many of which currently have pads that are four inches in height. "To remove four-inch pads abruptly could cause stress on a horse's feet and limbs," Glosser said.

Today's action allows gradual reductions to reach a pad height that could not reasonably be expected to cause soring, according to Glosser.

APHIS will continue to monitor horse shows and work with the industry to prevent soring. "If we find sored horses, we will take action against the responsible parties," Glosser said, "regardless of the devices used."

The Horse Protection Act was passed in 1970 to eliminate the practice of "soring." Soring is the use of cruel methods, devices or chemical substances on a horse's legs or feet that can reasonably be expected to cause a horse to experience pain when walking. Soring is done primarily to alter a horse's gait in the show ring.

On March 21, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, in a suit brought against USDA by the American Horse Protection Association, invalidated certain sections of USDA's horse protection regulations. In this order, and in a clarifying order issued April 13 in response to a USDA request, the Court directed USDA to initiate rulemaking to eliminate devices that could reasonably be expected to cause soring. The Court in its ruling specifically referred to pads and chains that are used on the front feet and legs of horses to alter their natural gait.

Glosser said that pads one inch or less in height could not reasonably be expected to cause soring. The half-inch pad covering the sole will offer adequate protection from shock and bruises. "Further," Glosser said, "by limiting the thickness of pads covering the sole of the foot and by requiring that they be made of a pliable material, we also will be able to prevent the insertion of objects between the pad and the horse's foot that might cause irritation and soring."

The new interim rules apply to all breeds of horses at shows or sales.

Before the court order, there was no limit on the height of pads in the Department's regulations, except for those on yearling horses, although the industry had its own rule limiting pads to four inches. The previous regulations also put a 16-ounce weight limit on horseshoes for yearlings, but put no weight limit on horseshoes for older horses. The weight limit on chains was eight ounces for two-year-old horses and ten ounces for horses three years of age or older.

Nancy Robinson (202) 447-8014

#

FIRST CONSERVATION PLANNING CONTRACT COMPLETED

WASHINGTON, April 25—Farmers who till some 788,000 acres in southwest Kansas will meet a deadline to stay eligible for U.S. Department of Agriculture program benefits, thanks to the first contract for conservation planning ever issued by USDA's Soil Conservation Service.

SCS Chief Wilson Scaling said John Ho and Associates, Inc., a consulting company from Dallas, Tex., completed planning by mid-April, less than half the time called for in their one-year contract.

"Our main concern right now is that farmers be able to meet conservation compliance provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill and stay eligible for USDA programs," Scaling said. "Our district conservationists in Kansas told us they would not be able to help all farmers with highly erodible land to develop a conservation plan in time to meet the December 31, 1989, deadline. So, we looked for ways to give them the help they needed. One of the most successful ideas was to contract out the planning to a qualified private company."

Kansas has the second largest amount of cropland of any state in the nation—29.1 million acres. Of that, SCS estimates more that one-third is

highly erodible. They also estimate that seventy percent of the conservation plans will be complete by the end of 1988.

Conservation planning involves developing an inventory and description of each soil type for each applicant's farm. Since Kansas has completed soil surveys on all its farmland, these data are readily available. Soil conservationists use this information to determine which fields are highly erodible. They then help the farmer to develop a conservation plan for highly erodible land that includes cropping systems and other conservation measures that will substantially reduce erosion and, if carried out, will allow the farmer to continue to participate in USDA programs. The plans are approved by the local conservation district.

The Kansas counties included in the contract with John Ho and Associates were Finney, Greely, Hamilton, Seward and Wichita. They contain some of the most highly erodible land in the state, primarily eroded by wind. The company had three planners in each county on a county-by-county basis until early March, when the staff doubled to plan two counties at a time. SCS computer software enables the planner to evaluate resource inventory data for a field or farm, come up with several alternative treatments, and analyze the cost to landowners.

Leslie Wilder (202) 447-3608

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USDA WITHDRAWS ALL DAIRY CATTLE EXPORT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM INITIATIVES

WASHINGTON, April 25—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the withdrawal of eight initiatives for dairy cattle under the Export Enhancement Program. The withdrawals are effective April 29.

The EEP for dairy cattle was initiated to encourage exports of dairy cattle made available as a result of the Dairy Termination Program. Since the DTP has ended, the remaining dairy cattle initiatives under the EEP are being withdrawn. The Commodity Credit Corporation accepted bonus bids for the export of 64,773 head of dairy cattle under the EEP.

The initiatives to be withdrawn are: Canary Islands (announced July 28, 1986), balance of 15 head; China (announced Nov. 18, 1987), balance of 2,815 head; Gulf Countries (announced Aug. 27, 1987), balance of 1,476 head; Indonesia (announced Oct. 5, 1987), balance of

4,000 head; Iraq (announced April 4, 1986), balance of 472 head; Morocco (announced Dec. 8, 1987), balance of 7,500 head; Saudi Arabia (announced Aug. 27, 1987), balance of 130 head; Turkey (announced Nov. 18, 1987), balance of 10,000 head.

Goldberg said USDA is giving exporters three days notice of the withdrawal in keeping with EEP regulations.

For further information contact William Hawkins (202) 382-9240, or Larry McElvain, (202) 447-6225.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 447-3448

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES

WASHINGTON, April 26—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

—long grain whole kernels, 11.56 cents per pound;
—medium grain whole kernels, 10.31 cents per pound;
—short grain whole kernels, 10.21 cents per pound;
—broken kernels, 5.78 cents per pound.

Loan repayment rates for 1987 crop warehouse or farm-stored rice loans are the higher of the world prices or 50 percent of the loan rates.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, the estimated average world prices for 1987 crop rough rice are:

—long grain, $6.95 per hundredweight;
—medium grain, $6.44 per hundredweight;
—short grain, $6.25 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3 p.m. EDT. The next scheduled price announcement will be made May 3 at 3 p.m. EDT, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-5954

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USDA REVISES COUNTRY, COMMODITY ALLOCATIONS FOR FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, April 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today issued revised country and commodity allocations for fiscal year 1988 under Titles I/III of Public Law 480—the Food for Peace Program.

Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg said current plans provide for distribution of $782.7 million in commodity shipments, changed from $788 million the previous quarter. Of the current amount, $721.5 million is presently allocated and $61.2 million is being held in a reserve to furnish commodities for unforeseen needs during the remainder of the fiscal year. There has been a recent transfer of the original allocation of $3 million for Guinea plus an additional $5 million out of the reserve to Title II to allow grant funding for meeting food needs in Guinea.

Goldberg said there has been an increase in the allocations for Guyana, Sri Lanka and Tunisia. Two new countries, the Maldives and the Philippines, have been identified for allocations and the allocation for Haiti has been withdrawn. In addition, the commodity programs for Somalia and Sudan were reduced in order to provide for ocean freight financing in the amount of $7.1 million and some minor revisions have been made to the commodity composition of the table.

The revised allocations meet the requirement of Section 111 of P.L. 480, which directs that not less than 75 percent of food-aid commodities be allocated to friendly countries that meet the per capita income criterion for lending by the International Development Association. Currently the countries in this category are those with an annual per capita gross national product of $835 or less.

Goldberg said the program takes into account many variables including commodity and budget availabilities; changing economic and foreign policy situations, including human rights assessments; potential for market development; fluctuations in commodity prices; availability of handling, storage and distribution facilities; and possible disincentives to local production.

Except for agreements already signed, these allocations do not represent final U.S. commitments or agreements with participating governments. Situations still may develop which could cause a further change in country and commodity allocations, Goldberg said.

Title I of P.L. 480 is a concessional sales program designed to promote

exports of agricultural commodities from the United States and to foster economic development in recipient countries. The program provides loans of up to 40 years, with a grace period of up to 10 years and low interest rates.

Title III provides for the forgiveness of the debt incurred under Title I, based on accomplishments in food for development programs and projects agreed upon by the United States and recipient countries.

Additional technical information on the P.L. 480 program is available from Mary Chambliss of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, (202) 447-3573.

Printed copies of the tables can be obtained form the USDA Office of Information, News Division-Room 403-A, Washington, D.C. 20250, ask for press release 540-88.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 447-3448

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USDA AND HHS ANNOUNCE PILOT FOOD SAFETY HOTLINE

WASHINGTON, April 27—Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng and Secretary of Health and Human Services Otis R. Bowen, M.D., today announced a pilot program for a Food Safety Hotline to serve American consumers in three states. The pilot program will have a toll-free number—1-800-426-3758—that residents in Florida, Illinois and Massachusets can call during June, July and August, to ask professional home economists questions on any aspect of food safety.

''Americans today are very conscious about good health, and the role of food in a balanced health regimen,'' Lyng said. ''An important part of good health is food safety, both in food as it is bought and as it is prepared in the home kitchen. We want consumers to know how to keep food safe.''

''Food-borne illness is a major public health concern in the United States,'' Bowen said. ''Food and Drug Administration scientists estimate that millions of Americans are afflicted with food-borne illnesses each year, often misinterpreted as the flu. The economic costs of food poisoning incidents are enormous, mounting into many billions of dollars in medical bills and much suffering and lost wages each year. Anything we can do to help teach Americans about safer and more sanitary ways

of handling and preparing foods will more than make up for the small investment in tax dollars for this new trial program.''

The results of the pilot program will determine whether the two departments set up a nationwide toll-free food safety hotline, Lyng said.

Linda Russell (202) 447-9113

#

USDA AMENDS VARROA MITE QUARANTINE REGULATIONS

WASHINGTON, April 27—Federal quarantine restrictions that affect 13 states infested with the Varroa mite, a parasite of honeybees, have been amended to reduce the area under quarantine in the states of Mississippi and Washington, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

''We are taking this action to ensure that the quarantined area includes only that portion of each state that must be quarantined to keep the Varroa mite from spreading,'' said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. ''Therefore, we are reducing the quarantined area in Mississippi to certain parts of Adams, Franklin and Wilkinson counties, and reducing the quarantined area in Washington to part of Klickitat county.''

Varroa mites were first discovered in this country last September in a Wisconsin apiary. Since then, they have been found in 12 other states: Florida, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota and Washington.

The original federal quarantine, which became effective April 6, restricted the interstate movement of bees and bee equipment from all 13 states to contain the spread of the Varroa mite.

Glosser said the decision to amend the quarantine is partially due to the fact that both Mississippi and Washington are enforcing restrictions on the movement of bees and bee equipment within their state. These restrictions are equivalent to the federal regulations already in place for the movement of regulated articles between states.

''We also have determined that the interstate spread of Varroa mite from Mississippi and Washington will be controlled by maintaining the quarantine in those portions of both states that include all known infested apiaries, as well as a border of about 100 square miles surrounding each infested apiary,'' Glosser said.

The Varroa mite is an external parasite of adult bees and their developing larvae, or brood. It causes decreased brood, deformed bees and weakening of the colony's ability to pollinate plants and produce honey. Infestation can occur so gradually that the mites may go unnoticed until serious damage is done.

This interim rule, which becomes effective today, will be published in the Federal Register on May 3. An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket No. 88-060 must be postmarked no later than July 5 and sent to: USDA, APHIS, Room 1143 South Building, P.O. Box 96464, Washington, D.C. 20090-6464.

Comments may be reviewed in Room 1141 of the South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Caree Lawrence (301) 436-6953

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EXOTIC NEWCASTLE DISEASE FOUND IN PET BIRDS IN MICHIGAN AND NEVADA

WASHINGTON, April 27—Exotic Newcastle disease, a highly contagious and deadly viral disease of pet birds and poultry, has been confirmed in pet birds in Michigan and Nevada, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported today. No domestic poultry are involved in the outbreak.

"Tests at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, showed the presence of exotic Newcastle disease virus in a three-week old spectacled Amazon parrot and in a young yellow-naped parrot owned by private individuals," said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Glosser said the birds' premises in West Bloomfield, Mich., and Las Vegas, Nev., were placed under state quarantines. USDA and state officials are tracing the disease outbreak to determine if additional birds or premises may have been exposed.

USDA has received reports that the spectacled Amazon parrot in Michigan may have originated in Mexico and was brought into the United States without undergoing the required 30-day quarantine. Five finches were exposed to the spectacled Amazon parrot.

The baby yellow nape was purchased in Las Vegas from a man who bought eight young napes at a bird swap in San Diego, Calif., on March 27. The individual who purchased the baby nape also owned two cockatiels and a Macaw. These birds, as well as the remaining yellow napes, were all exposed to exotic Newcastle disease. All the infected and exposed birds were destroyed to prevent the spread of the disease.

"Exotic Newcastle disease can be transmitted rapidly from bird to bird and premises to premises," said Glosser. "USDA destroys infected or exposed birds to prevent the virus from spreading to commercial poultry operations or pet bird facilities."

USDA pays indemnities to owners whose birds must be destroyed unless the birds are found to be infected while still in port-of-entry quarantine.

All species of birds are susceptible to exotic Newcastle disease, which can cause 50-95 percent death rates in infected chicken flocks. Poultry producers should practice strict biosecurity measures and take precautions to protect their flocks from this and other poultry diseases. Producers should prevent commercial poultry flocks from coming into contact with wild or migratory birds or exotic pet birds.

Exotic Newcastle disease poses no health risk to people who eat poultry or eggs. In rare cases, individuals who handle infected birds can contract the virus, which in humans causes a transitory eye inflammation and mild flu-like symptoms.

The most serious outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in the United States occurred in southern California in 1971-73, where the disease spread from infected pet birds to commerical poultry. Nearly 12 million birds, mostly laying hens, were destroyed at a cost of $56 million before the disease was eradicated by state and federal animal health officials.

Marlene Stinson (301) 436-7799

#

USDA APPROVES CITE® TEST AS OFFICIAL SUPPLEMENTAL TEST FOR BRUCELLOSIS

WASHINGTON, April 28—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved the concentration immunoassay technology (CITE®) test as an official supplement to standard card tests for brucellosis in cattle and bison.

"The CITE® test is a new procedure that permits diagnostic testing in the stockyard, thus providing faster results than if the blood had to be sent to a laboratory," said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

According to Glosser, testing negative to an official brucellosis test is a condition for interstate movements of certain cattle and bison. Official tests also are used to determine eligibility for indemnity payments for animals destroyed because of brucellosis.

The standard card test is the official test used most often on cattle and bison sent to market. In card testing, serum from each test animal is placed on a card to which an antigen solution is added. A positive reaction is indicated by "clumping" of the serum-antigen mixture. Animals that react positively to the card test can only be sold for immediate slaughter, or held in quarantine for several days until a final diagnostic test is done at a laboratory.

"However," said Glosser, "the card test is so sensitive that cattle and bison that have residual antibodies from being vaccinated against brucellosis may erroneously test positive for the disease. Thus, having the CITE® test as a supplement to the card test will help us avoid unnecessary destruction of valuable animals."

In the CITE® test, samples are applied to a specially treated membrane that "catches" antibodies present in the sample. After washing away excess material, an enzymatic solution is added, causing blue spots to appear. This color change helps identify positive reactions as "weak" or "strong".

"CITE® technology is already being used in tests for feline leukemia and canine heartworm across the country," said Glosser. Now the same technology has given us a supplemental brucellosis test that can be readily used in stockyards and livestock markets."

Brucellosis, also called Bang's disease, is an infectious bacterial disease that causes abortions, reduced fertility and lower milk yields in cattle.

Since 1951, USDA has taken the lead in a cooperative State-Federal program to eradicate brucellosis from the United States.

An interim rule on this action, effective April 27, will be published in the May 3 Federal Register. An original and two copies of written comments on this action may be sent to USDA-APHIS, Room 1143, South Building, P.O. Box 96464, Washington, DC 20090-6464. Comments should refer to Docket No. 88-026 and be postmarked or received by July 5.

Caree Lawrence (301) 436-6953

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